

and his family all the best in the years ahead.

THE IRAQI INTERIM CONSTITUTION

Mr. FRIST. Mr. President, we are now on the resolution and the two managers are gathering now to start that debate. In the interim period, I wish to make another comment that has to do with a truly historic occurrence in Iraq.

Today is a historic day for the Iraqi people. Today, the Iraq Governing Council will formally sign an interim constitution that represents one of the most liberal and democratic governing documents in the Arab world. It is a historic day for the entire Arab world.

The new Iraqi Constitution is a monumental achievement. I applaud the courage and the foresight of Iraq's leaders to seize this historic opportunity before them and to work together to forge a framework for freedom that reflects the aspirations and God-given rights of every single Iraqi citizen.

After 35 years of torment and oppression by an evil and dictatorial regime, Iraq is finally emerging from the shadows and becoming a democratic nation by and for the people. Remember, the people of Iraq just 1 year ago were ruled by a tyrant who worshipped Hitler and Stalin, two of the 20th century's most prolific mass murderers—just a year ago.

Iraq is emerging from a terrible history, and the Iraqi people deserve our highest praise for their ability to set aside recriminations and to set aside old ethnic conflicts, to confront their fears and overcome mistrust in order to embrace the future. It is my sincere hope that others in the region and around the world will take heart at Iraq's extraordinary progress and that this fledgling nation will one day soon become a beacon of freedom for all.

The new interim constitution is rightly a document of principles. It guarantees freedom of expression, freedom of assembly, privacy, thought, conscience, religious belief, and due process. It protects women, ethnic and religious minorities, and strives to balance regional and national imperatives.

No longer will the Iraqi people have to fear secret police, government abductions, torture, or arbitrary imprisonment. No more mass graves, no more child prisons, no more forced confessions or mass executions.

I have great hopes for Iraq. Like President Bush, I believe all people are capable and deserving of a democratic government. That is because I believe, like President Bush, freedom is an inherent right, not a privilege to be dispensed by pundits or politicians. Securing freedom in Iraq, as we all know, will be hard. The continuing vicious bombings against innocent Iraqis demonstrate that we are up against determined and evil forces. My heart goes out to those victims and to those families.

We know from our own 9/11 how truly devastating these acts of evil are to the immediate victims and to the nation that is forced to watch, helpless, in horror. But I have faith that the Iraqi people will persevere. We will not allow our enemies to divide us. We will stand together as two free nations. We will defeat the forces of terror and the Iraqi people will live in peace and freedom.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

CONGRESSIONAL BUDGET FOR THE UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT FOR FISCAL YEAR 2005

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the Senate will proceed to the consideration of S. Con. Res. 95, which the clerk will report.

The assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A concurrent resolution (S. Con. Res. 95) setting forth for the congressional budget for the United States Government for fiscal year 2005 and including the appropriate budgetary levels for fiscal years 2006 through 2009.

The Senate proceeded to consider the concurrent resolution.

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. The chairman of the committee, the Senator from Oklahoma, is recognized.

Mr. NICKLES. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the presence and use of small electronic calculators be permitted on the floor during Senate consideration of the fiscal year 2005 concurrent resolution on the budget.

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. NICKLES. I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. NICKLES. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. NICKLES. Mr. President, as we begin consideration of the budget resolution, I want to urge our colleagues to be prepared for a long, busy week. Under the rules of budget law, we have 50 hours on the resolution. Last year I am not sure how many hours we had, but it was a lot more than 50. I believe we had 81 rollcall votes. It was a very difficult and long week. It was actually longer than a week. It spilled over into 2 weeks.

It is our intention to finish this week. That is going to take the cooperation of all Members. The majority leader already announced for Members to expect long nights, long days, and a lot of votes. I urge our colleagues to be prepared for a long week. Please don't come up and say, I have a plane reservation at 3 o'clock. I don't think you can count on that. I think you have to

assume you are going to be here for very long evenings during long days—especially on Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday—until we conclude this resolution. I want to make sure that is known.

Saying that, I urge colleagues to work with my friend and colleague, Senator CONRAD, and myself. If you have amendments, please present them to us. Give us time to consider them. Maybe we can accept them; maybe we can't; maybe they will have to be objected to. But at least give us a chance to review the amendments.

Last year we ended up in a very demeaning process. We called it a vote-arama. But we had a lot of votes that were on sincere issues that were considered with very little debate. I would like to—one of the little legacy things—change the way we manage Senate budget resolutions. By saying that, I would like to avoid the vote-arama, or at least minimize it, and maybe have a certain number of votes on each side. Sometimes last year we voted on the same thing several times. I don't think that helps the Senate. I want us to represent the Senate very well.

I want to warn our colleagues to expect a long week. Hopefully we will conclude. I would love to have it concluded Thursday night. I doubt that will happen. But we will work aggressively with all of our colleagues. And when we get into votes, we are going to be very pushy on trying to limit the time on those votes.

I am just making mention of a couple of those things to let colleagues know they should expect a long week and late nights. It may be that Senator CONRAD and those who are proposing amendments will work late and we will stack votes for the next morning. That might be my preference. But I will work with Senator CONRAD, who is a very good friend and manager on the minority side, on this difficult challenge of passing a budget.

Again, we have the budget resolution before us. I will be talking about that momentarily. It cuts the deficit in half. Actually, we cut it in half over 3 years. The deficits are far too high. Having \$500 billion deficits is not acceptable to this Senator, nor do I think it is acceptable to anybody. We charted a path to bring it down and bring it down rather abruptly. It will take the cooperation of all people to conclude this week, and also to make that happen. That is not easy easily done.

Again, I urge the cooperation of all of our colleagues and look forward to working with my colleague, Senator CONRAD, for the remainder of this week.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mrs. DOLE). The Senator from North Dakota.

Mr. CONRAD. Thank you, Madam President.

I join the chairman of the committee in reminding our colleagues that this